

Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station

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THE RURAL POPULATION OF OHIO WHERE IS IT INCREASING AND DECREASING? WHY?

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A study of the changes in the rural population of Ohio and of the causes that have operated to bring them about is considered an essential feature of an Agricultural Survey of the State such as is now being conducted by the Ohio Experiment Station. A State may have specially valuable agricultural resources and yet be of little agricultural value to the nation at large unless it possesses an abundant and stable rural citizenship.

In connection with this Circular we reproduce four of the maps which are being used in such a study and to which the attention of those who are interested in such problems is invited. The map given in Figure 1 shows the decreases, if any, in rural population in each rural township of the State between the years 1900 and 1910 as determined and reported by the U. S. Census Bureau.* Each dot on this map represents a decrease within this 10-year period of one percent in the rural population of the township on the map of which it is placed. Five dots show that there was a decrease of five percent, ten dots a decrease of ten percent, and so on. The

*The statistics, which were sent to the press by the Census Bureau in March, 1911, are subject to correction in the later and final publication. The corrections, if any, however, will doubtless be insignificant, and owing to the nature of this study need not be considered in connection with it.

absence of dots indicates that there probably was a gain, or at least no decrease. Whether or not there was a gain may be determined from the map in Figure 2. It will thus be seen that in Figure 1 the greater the number of dots, or roughly speaking, the more dense the map is made with dots in any township or section, the greater has been the decrease of the rural population in that township or section in the period named. A single exception to this rule will be noted in the case of townships in which are shown a small cross. The presence of such a cross on the map of a township indicates that for some reason it was necessary to reject the figures for that township. The Station will be pleased, however, to supply, upon request, all the information available regarding any of the townships so marked.

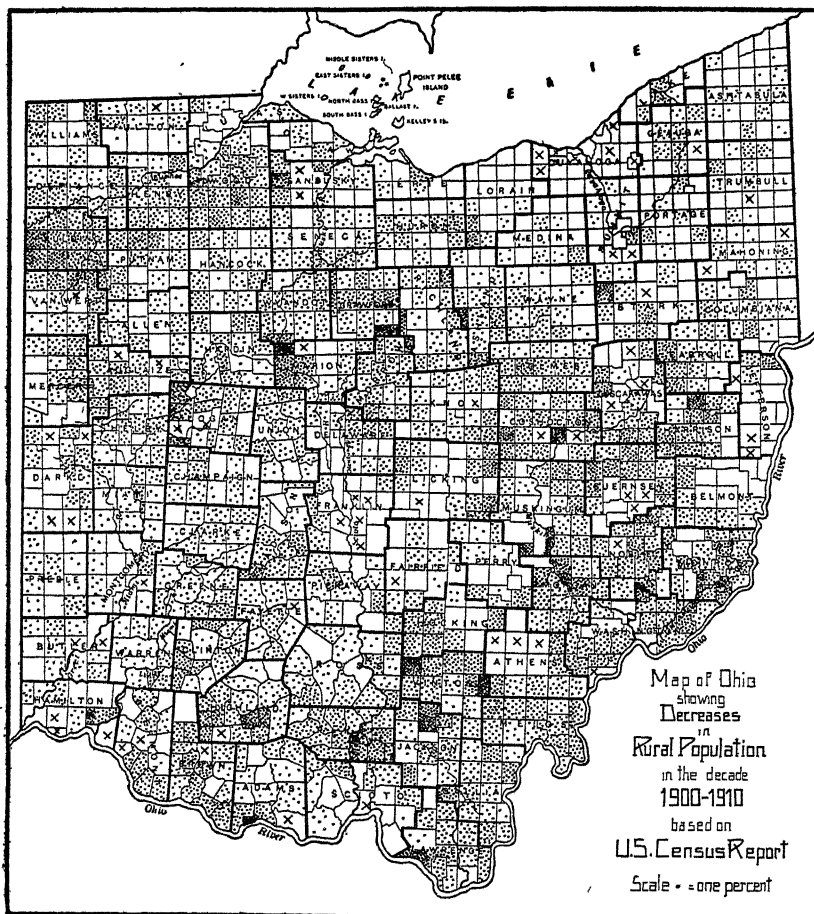


FIG. 1

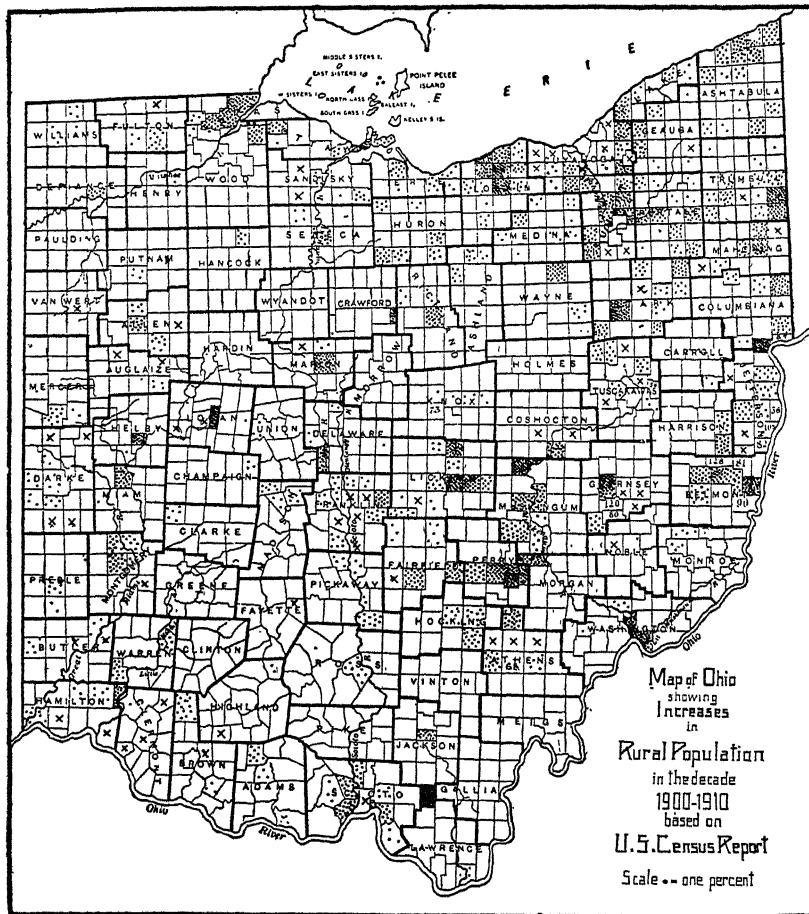


FIG. 2

The map in Figure 2 shows in a similar manner the increases instead of decreases in the rural population between 1900 and 1910. In this case the dots each represent one percent of increase instead of one percent of decrease. Accordingly, the greater the number of dots or the blacker the map of any township, the greater has been the increase in that township. On this map will be noted another exception to the dotting system. In some townships the gain was so great that it was impossible to plot on their maps the number of dots corresponding to the percentage of gain. Accordingly, the figures of percentage have been used instead. For instance, the number 80 within a township would indicate that the rural population of that township had gained 80 percent within the ten-year

period. The maps given in Figures 3 and 4 represent respectively in a similar manner the decreases and increases in rural population between the years 1890 and 1900.

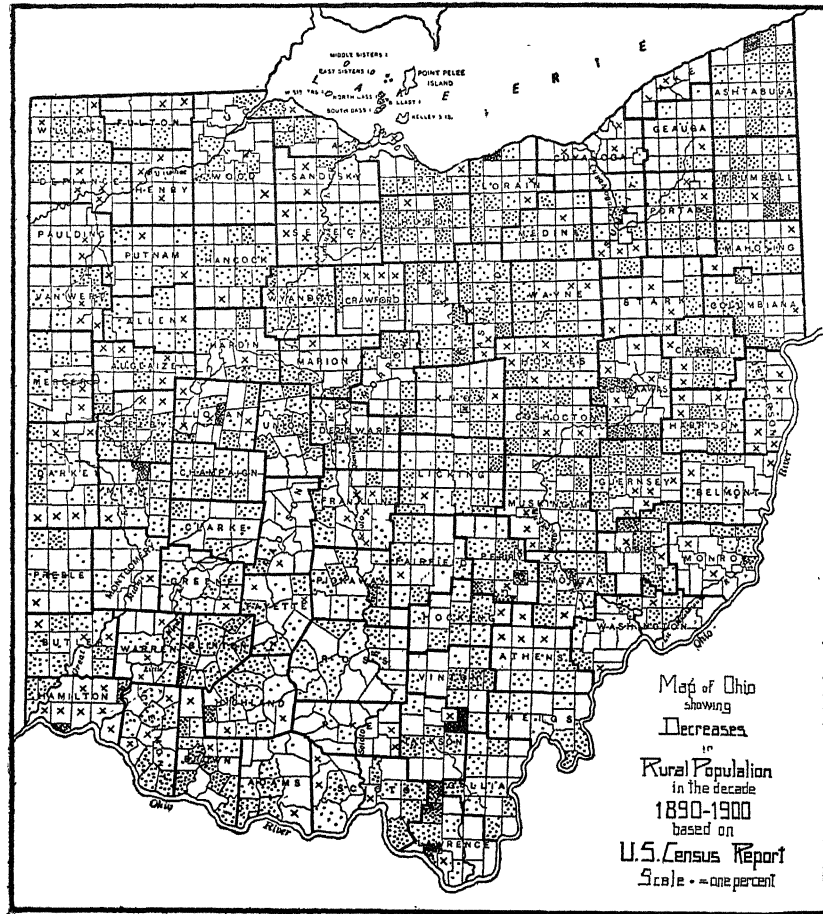


FIG. 3

In its studies of urban and rural population the U. S. Census Bureau defines rural population as that which does not reside in cities or other incorporated places of 2500 or more inhabitants. In a study such as is being made by the Ohio Station in which conditions are being analyzed township by township, it was deemed necessary to go more into detail. Accordingly, it was decided to define rural population in this study as that which does not reside in cities or villages which are incorporated. By using this classification instead of the one used by the Census Bureau, the population

of some 644 towns, totaling in 1910, 453,289, almost ten percent of the population of the State, was transferred from the rural to the urban class; but the population of many other unincorporated towns, some much larger than those which are incorporated, was classed as rural. While there are doubtless many persons residing in these small incorporated towns whose interests and inclinations are even more rural than are those of many who live in the open country, and therefore should be classed as rural, it is, on the other hand, probable that for every such a one there is at least one in the unincorporated towns which are classed as rural, whose interest is entirely urban.

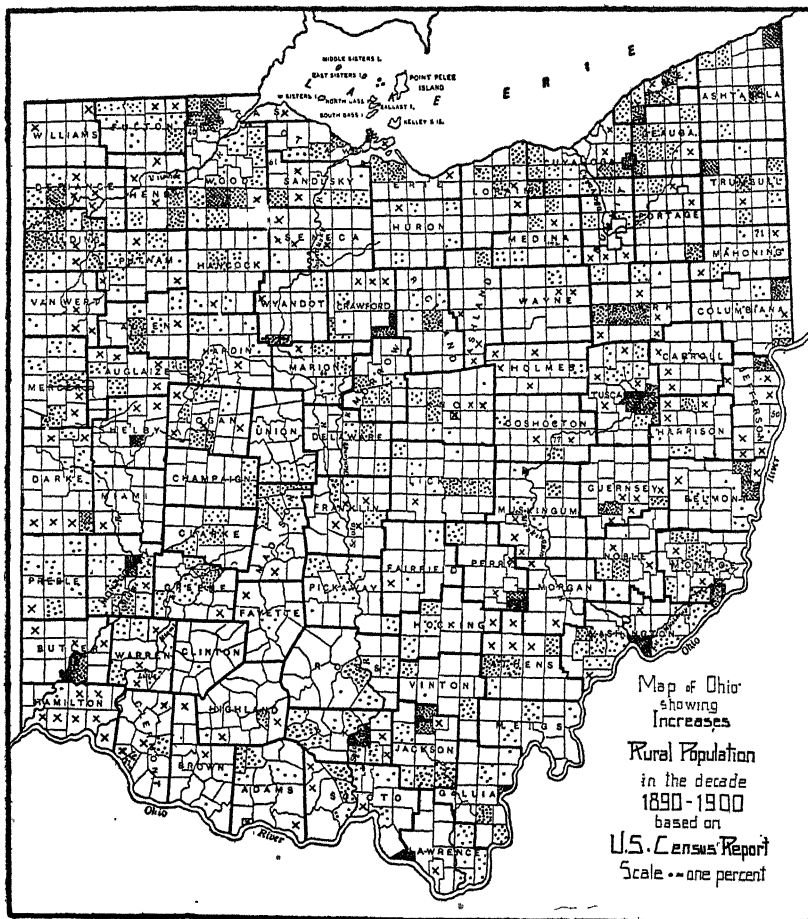


FIG. 4

With this classification in mind it may be well to turn again to the maps. An examination of the map in Figure 1 for the decade 1900 to 1910, will reveal the fact that there was not a county in the State which did not lose in agricultural population in at least four townships. Eleven counties show a loss in all townships. Ten more have lost in all but one township and thirteen others have lost in all but two townships. In this list of thirty-four will be found many of the best agricultural counties of the State. Indeed, one of the most productive counties in the State shows perhaps the heaviest and most uniform losses in population. Taking the State as a whole, out of a total of 1,352 rural townships, 947 or 70 percent showed a loss in population in this period. Probably 70 percent of the 60 which have been "crossed out," as previously mentioned, would also have shown a similar loss had it been possible to make the comparison.

POPULATION OF OHIO

(FIGURES FROM U. S. CENSUS BUREAU)

	1890	1900	Increase Percent	1910	Increase Percent
Total for State.....	3,672,316	4,157,545	13.2	4,767,121	14.7
Urban.....	1,829,862	2,394,001	30.8	3,116,837	30.2
Rural.....	1,842,454	1,763,544	-4.3	1,650,284	-6.4
Percent Rural.....	50.2	42.4	-15.5	34.6	-18.4
Loss in rural population in preceding decade.....	....	78,910	....	112,707	....
Average loss per township (1352).....	....	58.4	....	83.4	....

In 1890 the rural population of Ohio, according to the foregoing table and classification, amounted to 50 percent of the total for the entire State. In 1900 this percentage had decreased to 42 and in 1910 to a little less than 35. It will be noted also that whereas the State population increased fairly uniformly, a little less than 15 percent each decade, and the urban population increased in a similarly uniform manner at about 30 percent for each period, the rural population, on the other hand, actually decreased 4.3 percent the first decade and 6.4 percent the second. The average decrease per township in the first decade for the entire number of rural townships (1352) was 58 persons and in the second decade 83 persons. Since many of the townships which made gains made very pronounced ones (see Figure 2) it is probable that the average actual loss in the 947 townships which did lose in population in the second decade, was not less than double the average for the entire 1352, or from 150 to 175 per township.

From the foregoing it will be evident that the rural population of Ohio is not only not keeping up with the urban population but also that it is actually decreasing at an appreciable rate which is growing larger as the decades go by. The question then arises, how long can these townships continue to lose from 10 to 15 or more people per year as have 70 percent of the townships of Ohio, many of which are in the most productive areas of the State, and not have some very definite effect on the State at large, at least on its agricultural production. The decrease for the past ten years was 40 percent greater than between the years 1890-1900. Will it be greater or less in the succeeding ten years? What are the causes that are bringing this about? Are these changes normal, and if they are not normal, what can be done to remedy the condition?

Again the Experiment Station invites every person who is interested in this problem to study these maps and to favor it with their suggestions and ideas regarding this problem. It desires especially to hear from those who have made accurate observations themselves of the conditions in any rural township in Ohio throughout the past ten, fifteen or twenty years. An examination of the maps as a whole, and especially those shown in Figures 1 and 3, may be of assistance in determining these suggestions. In the map of the last decade (Figure 1) note that the largest light area is in the north-eastern part of the State. Try to explain that and the small, light areas such as that in the south-western part or the light streak across Lucas, Fulton, and Williams counties. By studying the maps in this way many ideas may develop. The "Why" in connection with this decrease in rural population needs to be answered if possible and it is hoped the thinking people of the State will assist in answering it. A member of the Station staff will begin, this year, as a part of the Agricultural Survey, a field study of the history of the agriculture and the people of the State. It will be manifest, therefore, that any suggestions offered will be put to good use. Persons who desire it will be visited in connection with this field study.

The computations and plotting in connection with the maps in this Circular were conducted by Miss Marion Carrington assisted by Mr. Hubert Shellenberger, both of the Department of Cooperation.

Approved:

CHAS. E. THORNE, *Director.*

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